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Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3840th Meeting

Thursday, 4 December 1997, 4.30 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Berrocal Soto	(Costa Rica)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Larraín
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Konishi
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Poland	Mr. Wlosowicz
	Portugal	Mr. Monteiro
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Lidén
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Gomersall
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 1111 (1997) (S/1997/935)

Letter dated 2 December 1997 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) concerning the situation between Iraq and Kuwait addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1997/942)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.30 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 1111 (1997) (S/1997/935)

Letter dated 2 December 1997 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) concerning the situation between Iraq and Kuwait addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1997/942)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 1111 (1997), document S/1997/935, and document S/1997/942, which contains the text of a letter dated 2 December 1997 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) concerning the situation between Iraq and Kuwait addressed to the President of the Security Council. Members of the Council also have before them document S/1997/951, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call upon those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The purpose of implementing the oil-for-food resolutions, resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997), is to ameliorate the humanitarian situation in Iraq. It is regrettable that, according to the report of the Secretary-General, despite the implementation of those two resolutions, the humanitarian situation in Iraq is continuing to worsen. The Iraqi people continue to face serious problems in nutrition and health care. A third of the children under five years of age and a quarter of the men and women under the age of 26 suffer from malnutrition today.

The quantity of oil sales stipulated in resolution 1111 (1997) is far from being able to satisfy Iraq's basic humanitarian needs. At the same time, owing to the slow pace of the review and approval procedure, at the conclusion of phase II there are still deliveries outstanding under phase I, and the overwhelming majority of phase II import applications have yet to be approved. Such a situation, in which the import of humanitarian goods lags far behind the export of oil, is unacceptable. China is deeply concerned about it. We urge the parties concerned to pay attention to this problem and promptly adopt practical measures to solve it.

The Chinese delegation believes that, since the current quantity of oil sales cannot satisfy the humanitarian needs of Iraq, the Security Council needs to increase the quantity of Iraq's oil exports in order to guarantee the country's essential humanitarian needs. We look forward to an early report by the Secretary-General in this regard.

At the same time, I also wish to point out that if the revenue from oil exports cannot be speedily used to meet humanitarian needs, then, no matter how much oil is exported, it will not ease Iraq's humanitarian plight. Such a situation is not in conformity with the spirit of the relevant resolutions. Therefore, we strongly urge the parties concerned to speed up the review and approval procedure so that humanitarian goods may be shipped to Iraq as soon as possible.

Out of consideration for the continued implementation of resolutions on oil for food in order to ameliorate the humanitarian situation in Iraq, the Chinese delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of Egypt would like at the outset to express its deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and lucid report on the implementation of phase II of resolution 986 (1995), known as the oil-for-food resolution. The report clearly and sincerely records the Iraqi people's continued suffering as a result of the sanctions. It also reflects, even more starkly, the insufficiency of the financial resources being devoted to alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people and the

shortcomings of the procedure being followed in the implementation of this ambitious programme.

A close examination of the implementation of the provisions of resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997) leads to several conclusions that can be summed up as follows. First, the financial resources resulting from sales of $2 billion worth of Iraqi oil every six months are insufficient to deal with the severe humanitarian crisis the people of Iraq are suffering. Secondly, the implementation of phases I and II of the oil-for-food programme has led to financial accumulations from oil sales in the escrow account, which, according to the latest estimate, have reached more than $300 million, while contracts for the purchase of humanitarian supplies for the people of Iraq are being scuttled by the slow pace of proceedings in the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 661 (1990) or as a result of routine financial procedures.

All of these obstacles prevent the achievement of the careful balance that must be struck between the Iraqi oil sales, which of course are not an end in themselves, and meeting the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, which is the ultimate objective for which we are all striving.

The delegation of Egypt welcomes the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his recent report on these two problems. First, he recommends that the Security Council re-examine the adequacy of the revenues envisaged in resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997) and consider the possibility of increasing those revenues in order to meet Iraq's priority humanitarian requirements. Egypt strongly supports this recommendation.

Secondly, the Secretary-General directs the United Nations Office of the Iraq Programme, headed by its Executive Director, Mr. Benon Sevan, to formulate recommendations that would ensure provision of the necessary goods at the appropriate time without obstacles, to address concerns over processing and supply issues, and to devise a new system to clearly identify interrelated applications and then bring them to the attention of the Security Council Committee.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's intention to provide as soon as possible a supplementary report containing the results of a study of the situation, as well as concrete recommendations, in order to achieve the ultimate objectives of resolution 986 (1995) and the subsequent resolution.

In the light of the recommendations of the Secretary-General, and taking into account the urgent humanitarian nature of this question, the delegation of Egypt had hoped that the draft resolution before us today would reflect a preliminary agreement by the members of the Security Council to increase the amount of oil that Iraq would be allowed to sell in order to deal with the urgent humanitarian needs, and that the extent of this increase would be considered in the light of the supplementary report of the Secretary-General on this question. But the negotiations yesterday and today, during which all delegations showed a high degree of flexibility, have made it clear that there is an agreement to deal with this question by increasing revenues from oil sales, as well as to adopt the necessary procedures to develop and improve the working methods of the sanctions Committee and the Secretariat in a manner that would ensure the delivery of humanitarian relief in order to meet the needs of the Iraqi people in parallel with oil sales. This must be implemented when the supplementary report of the Secretary-General, expected at the end of January, is available, in order to allow Iraq to make full use of this programme.

In view of the foregoing — and taking into account the importance of renewing the validity of this resolution, given its urgent humanitarian nature, as well as the additions to its provisions, which have become more balanced, and which affirm that the Council will consider the situation once again when it receives the supplementary report of the Secretary-General at the end of January — the delegation of Egypt will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): The humanitarian situation in Iraq, described in unequivocal terms in the report of the Secretary-General, gives rise to deep concern. The population of Iraq, in particular children, continues to face a serious nutritional and health situation. There is an urgent need to contain the risk of further deterioration.

Sweden fully supports the recommendation by the Secretary-General to extend the so-called oil-for-food mechanism established by resolution 986 (1995). This mechanism is an important instrument to help alleviate the current plight of the Iraqi population.

Improvements to the mechanism can and should be made. Sweden commends the initiative of the Secretary-General to conduct a thorough review of the oil-for-food programme and to submit a supplementary report at the beginning of 1998, containing his recommendations on

ways to streamline the arrangements. We support, and will actively contribute to, all endeavours aimed at achieving a more targeted, focused and flexible approach to address the humanitarian situation in Iraq. An increase of the revenues through the sale of more oil, together with improvements to the implementation of the programme, could make this instrument more effective. In due time, Sweden would like the Council to be ready to consider favourably the recommendations by the Secretary-General to this effect.

At the same time, the oil-for-food programme under resolution 986 (1995) cannot alone satisfy all the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. The Government of Iraq bears a heavy responsibility towards its population. The allocation of national resources to meet humanitarian needs is therefore essential.

Sweden supports the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): The humanitarian plight of the Iraqi people has been a source of continuing concern to us. We are especially concerned by the report of the Secretary-General that serious nutritional and health problems, in particular for vulnerable groups, persist in Iraq, despite the efforts made by the international community under resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997). My delegation firmly believes that the oil-for-food programme envisaged in these resolutions should continue in an uninterrupted and smooth manner.

It is for this reason that we support the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend once again the relevant provisions of resolution 986 (1995) for another six months. We also take note of his suggestions to re-examine the adequacy of the revenues envisaged by resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997) in due course, and look forward to his supplementary report in this regard.

Indeed, the oil-for-food programme is unprecedented and unique in its nature. Its implementation process is bound to be complex, given the magnitude of all the attendant political, commercial and humanitarian dimensions. Since the beginning of the programme a year ago, enormous efforts have been made by the international community to set up the modalities for its effective implementation and refine them on an ongoing basis. In this regard, we acknowledge with appreciation the efforts made by the Secretary-General as well as the sanctions Committee thus far to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall implementation process of the programme.

The Secretary-General has taken a number of measures to address problems identified through the workings of the three tiers of United Nations observation. In particular, we welcome the Secretary-General's recent initiative to establish the Office of the Iraq Programme and entrust it with the task of better coordinating and facilitating overall aspects of the implementation of the programme. The Office will play a catalytic role in taking stock of the experiences gained through phases I and II and in moving the programme ahead. We have full confidence in the leadership of the Secretary-General to guide the implementation of the oil-for-food programme towards greater effectiveness, equitability and adequacy.

The sanctions Committee on Iraq also continues to define its working methods and procedures and we expect it to conduct a thorough review of all aspects of its work. It is our sincere hope that through these continuing efforts, the delivery of humanitarian supplies to the civilian population in Iraq will be expedited in the coming months, so that we can see the humanitarian purpose of the oil-for-food programme fulfilled to the fullest possible extent.

My delegation finds that the draft resolution before us addresses the aforementioned points well and in a comprehensive and balanced manner, and therefore we will vote in favour of it.

Mr. Monteiro (Portugal): The draft resolution we have before us, which my delegation fully supports, is not just a simple renewal of Security Council resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997). While addressing specific aspects, in order to allow for a smoother transition to the next phase of its implementation, the draft represents a decisive step in humanitarian operations in Iraq.

It clearly states the Council's intention to avoid further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in that country, and to find ways of meeting more efficiently and adequately the priority humanitarian requirements of the Iraqi people. My delegation strongly supports these objectives, as well as an increase in the amount of oil sales permitted. But it is not only a question of increasing the amount of oil revenues. Funds are very important and irreplaceable, but also important, in our view, is how best they can be used to achieve the expected goals. It is necessary to face the problems as a whole, understand their complexity and find ways to solve the difficulties rapidly, while always bearing in mind the objective we want to pursue and the human dimension of the programme.

As important as increasing the funds is achieving the desired result: the alleviation of the suffering of the Iraqi people. The serious nutrition and health problems clearly identified in the Secretary-General's report are realities that we must rapidly attack with adequate measures. These are crucial aspects of the day-to-day life endured by the Iraqis.

The Council should address these questions, looking particularly at the plight of the most vulnerable groups in Iraq. The situation of children is especially distressing, since they are suffering all the effects of the current difficulties precisely when they most need all possible support for their physical and psychological development. Other vulnerable groups are also identified in the Secretary-General's report, and we hope they will be helped by specific programmes to meet their needs, designed in cooperation with the Iraqi authorities.

Our intention is to state clearly that the task we face is to work on solutions that could produce rapid, positive results in these areas and for these groups. We can benefit from the experience and knowledge of the United Nations agencies in the field and other humanitarian actors. They have expertise and can advise us on the best way to achieve those results.

We have an important task ahead of us. We strongly welcome the Secretary-General's initiatives to assist us in the search for adequate solutions that could improve the efficiency of this humanitarian operation. We look forward very positively to the recommendations and conclusions he will present at the end of January in his supplementary report.

As Chairman of the Committee established by resolution 661 (1990), I can assure the Council that all Committee members will spare no effort to contribute to improving the methods of work of the Committee in order to expedite the approval of contracts and refine the overall mechanism to ensure the supply of goods. This can only be done in close coordination with the Secretariat and with the political support of this Council.

We must not forget that no positive results can be achieved without the cooperation of the Iraqi authorities. The importance and urgency of attaining the aforementioned objectives should not, in our view, be subject to dispute or conflicting political opinions. We are confident that we will gather the cooperation of all interested parties.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The draft resolution to be submitted to the vote contains a compromise text which we believe fully responds to the humanitarian concerns which inspired Security Council resolution 986 (1995). The validity of that resolution is rightly renewed, which demonstrates that the Council has once again shouldered its responsibilities in the humanitarian sphere.

My country believes that the programme established in resolution 986 (1995) is complementary to the efforts that must be carried out by the Government of Iraq to attend to the needs of its population. The Government of Iraq thus has serious obligations with respect to the implementation of this programme, which are independent from the responsibilities that fall to the various United Nations organs. We believe that this key aspect must be taken into account in making decisions on the basic aspects of resolution 986 (1995), such as, for instance, the amount indicated in paragraph 1 of that resolution.

The current programme could undoubtedly be improved, as is indicated in the Secretary-General's report, which identifies specific problems that have been detected in its implementation. But in seeking solutions we must also bear in mind that the Iraqi people is the final recipient of this programme.

Among these problems, we are particularly concerned by the situation of the vulnerable groups of central and southern Iraq. We hail the Secretary-General's efforts in that connection, as a result of which assurances have been obtained from the Iraqi Government that it will attend to their humanitarian needs. We hope that the Iraqi Government will deepen this commitment and make it concrete by furnishing complete information with respect to the measures that Government adopts with regard to those vulnerable groups. My delegation thus awaits with great interest the recommendations to be made by the Secretary-General in his supplementary report to the Council at the end of January.

My delegation supports the contents of the draft resolution submitted to this Council. We are pleased, in particular, that the text contemplates mechanisms to ensure that the oil-for-food programme will not be subject to possible interruptions for purely administrative reasons. Anything else would have been nothing less than a betrayal of the spirit of resolution 986 (1995) and would have exposed the Iraqi people to a humanitarian crisis of considerable proportions.

We also believe it important that the draft resolution appeals to the Government of Iraq to ensure the security and protection of all persons appointed by the Secretary-General in the context of the implementation of this resolution. This is a timely reminder and a precondition for the creation of a climate that will be conducive to the unhampered application of this draft resolution.

In conclusion, we are convinced that the draft resolution before the Council is in line with the humanitarian goals of resolution 986 (1995), for which reason my delegation will vote in favour of it.

Mr. Mahugu (Kenya): Today's draft resolution on Iraq addresses the desperate humanitarian situation in that country and our reaction to it through the oil-for-food programme initiated in 1995 under Security Council resolution 986 (1995). The programme thus authorized sought and continues to seek to mitigate the negative effects of the sanctions regime on Iraq. In supporting this draft resolution, we are acutely aware of the problems that continue to plague the implementation of the humanitarian programme in Iraq.

The present renewal is viewed against the backdrop of the recently heightened tensions between Iraq and the United Nations, which precipitated a crisis, and the report of the Secretary-General dated 28 November 1997 submitted pursuant to paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 1111 (1997), prior to the end of 180-day period, on the overall implementation of the programme. At the height of these tensions, and during the standoff between Iraq and the United Nations, the attention of the international community was drawn to the acute humanitarian situation, which has caused immense suffering among innocent civilians in Iraq. The diplomatic activities that followed added impetus to the growing momentum at the United Nations and elsewhere for the Council urgently to address the humanitarian situation in Iraq.

In our view, therefore, the two questions we should ask ourselves as the Council considers the renewal of resolution 986 (1995) for an additional 180 days are, first, where does the problem lie with regard to this rather difficult situation? And secondly, what should be done to mitigate the suffering occasioned by the sanctions on the innocent civilian population?

In answer to these questions, we have to look at the Secretary-General's report and his briefing today as well as at the external reports of the United Nations agencies involved in the implementation of the programme on the ground. They all agree that the delivery and distribution of food and medicine in Iraq has progressed according to plan and that the Iraqi Government and local authorities have cooperated in this regard. The Executive Director of the Office of the Iraq Programme, Mr. Benon Sevan, who has just returned from Iraq, has confirmed that this is the case in the field. In this regard, let me just add a word of commendation to him and his team for doing an excellent job under difficult circumstances.

The Secretary-General, while acknowledging the considerable improvements made in the approval process under phase II, is of the view that much remains to be done to ensure an overall increase in the speed of implementation of the programme. We know — and this is a view shared by many observers outside this Council — that notwithstanding the efforts of the Security Council Committee, its working methods remain cumbersome and time-consuming and must, in the words of the Secretary-General, "be urgently addressed". We know that the Chairman of that Committee, our colleague Ambassador António Monteiro, has exerted immense efforts to alleviate this problem, for which we commend him.

It is therefore necessary to re-examine the whole process of the implementation of resolution 986 (1995) and how it has fared. Unfortunately, that resolution created expectations that have become difficult, if not impossible, to meet under existing arrangements. For this reason, there has to be a genuine attempt to improve the humanitarian situation.

According to the report of the Secretary-General, there is a need to adjust upwards the $2 billion worth of oil exports. We agree with the Secretary-General that the amount is inadequate to meet the humanitarian requirements of the Iraqi people and that they continue to face a serious nutritional and health situation. After all, out of this $2 billion, only $1.23 billion goes to the purchase of humanitarian goods. It is also of concern that problems such as the slow and erratic pace at which humanitarian inputs arrive in Iraq, the operating difficulties of the distribution system, and the deteriorating basic infrastructure in the various key sectors responsible for providing social services continue to hamper the implementation process. The Secretary-General tells us that the poor state of the infrastructure has undermined the value of humanitarian inputs, and he is right. This is an important issue because in every

decision we take, we must bear in mind the humanitarian dimension in its implementation.

It is with this in mind that we welcome the Secretary-General's intention to undertake a systematic review of the whole process of contracting, processing of applications, approvals, procurement and shipment and distribution. This should be conducted urgently and should address comprehensively the issues I have mentioned.

We look forward to the Secretary-General's supplementary report intended to address these issues by the end of January 1998. That report should look into all problems and avoid a piecemeal approach in response to the many concerns.

Mr. Wlosowicz (Poland): The Security Council is about to adopt a draft resolution extending the relevant provisions of resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997) for a further period of six months to ensure the continuity of the oil-for-food programme instituted by this Council as a temporary and subsidiary measure to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Iraq and mitigate the unintended effects of measures imposed on that country.

The Polish delegation remains strongly committed to the humanitarian objectives of the programme, whose complexity and unique character has been underlined by the Secretary-General in his latest report concerning this issue.

Having examined this document, we note with great concern that despite the ongoing implementation of the humanitarian programme for almost 12 months now, the people in Iraq continue to be confronted with serious nutritional shortages and a lack of adequate health care. In addressing this very serious and painful problem, we wish to reaffirm our view that full normalization of the critical humanitarian situation of the Iraqi population will be possible only after Iraq has fulfilled its obligations by responding in a positive and decisive fashion to the Security Council decisions, thus allowing the Council to lift the present sanctions regime.

Nevertheless, we believe that at this juncture the Security Council, which is determined to avoid any further deterioration of the current humanitarian crisis, should make every effort to ensure that the programme under resolution 986 (1995) effectively addresses the essential needs of the Iraqi people, who are bearing the brunt of the sanctions regime.

We share the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General in his report, and we see an urgent need to review, and possibly improve, the process of the implementation of the programme in all of its aspects, including procedures and working methods; the level of necessary cooperation of the Iraqi authorities; the unsatisfactory pace of the arrival of humanitarian supplies in Iraq; the operating difficulties of the distribution system; the nutritional value of the current food basket, especially in relation to the pressing needs of the vulnerable groups; and the adequacy of the revenues currently envisaged to meet Iraq's priority humanitarian requirements.

With regard to the latter issue, we note with concern the observation of the Secretary-General contained in his report that even if all of the humanitarian supplies provided under resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997) were to arrive in time in Iraq, they would be insufficient to address, even as a temporary measure, all the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, given their scale and urgency.

In this context, we wish to express our satisfaction at the fact that the present draft resolution notes with appreciation the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the Council re-examine the adequacy of revenues and consider the possibility o£ increasing them in accordance with the priority needs to be determined by the Secretary-General.

I wish to point out that we are grateful to the Secretary-General for the steps he has already taken to define those priority requirements, and we welcome his readiness to submit to the Council the results of this work by the end of January next year.

We are confident that the Council will find ways to respond positively to all of the Secretary-General's recommendations on how best to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people by enhancing the efficiency and adequacy of the programme.

We note with appreciation the progress that has been made by the Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) in refining and clarifying its working procedures, and we endorse the encouragement addressed to the Committee in the present draft resolution to continue its efforts in that direction in order to expedite the approval process.

Finally, we wish to express our earnest hope that the present draft resolution, as well as the efforts that will be undertaken by the Council as a follow-up to the supplementary report of the Secretary-General, will contribute effectively to the alleviation of the acute humanitarian crisis in Iraq. That is a goal shared by all members of the Security Council as well as by the international community at large.

Poland will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): It was necessary to extend the humanitarian provisions of resolution 986 (1995). But, in the light of the report of the Secretary-General, for which we thank him, and in the light of the scope of the humanitarian disaster in Iraq, such an extension is not enough. We should have gone further. Some, including France, felt that it would have been possible to broaden the existing machinery and substantially increase the available funding. Several delegations did not feel that the moment had come to improve resolution 986 (1995) despite the urgency of the situation and despite public statements to that effect made here just a month ago. We can be pleased, however, that everyone agreed at least on the need to tackle this matter very quickly, within two months. That time-frame will enable us to conduct a thorough review of the matter and to consider it on the basis of the proposals that the Secretary-General will be making, which we trust will be as concrete as possible.

The draft resolution is clear. The Council would welcome the report of the Secretary-General and would note with appreciation the recommendations in that report. The Council would then express its determination to avoid any further deterioration of the current humanitarian situation. The Security Council would then indicate three main ways to reverse the trend.

The first of these is to improve the procedures of the sanctions Committee. The Committee will be reporting to the Council no later than 30 January 1998. It is truly unacceptable that only 15 per cent of phase II contracts have been approved and that 15 per cent of phase I goods have not yet arrived at their destinations in Iraq. Admittedly there has been some progress in the past few months: on the initiative of the Secretary-General, the distribution plan has been computerized; monitoring has been reorganized and consolidated through the establishment of the Office of the Iraq Programme, also on the initiative of the Secretary-General. I note too that the procedures in the Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) have somewhat improved, permitting contracts to be approved more rapidly under phase II than they were under phase I.

But much remains to be done. Transparency must be increased, especially in the financial area and with respect to the motives, or pretexts, for delaying the approval of contracts. The Secretariat staff must be enlarged so that more tasks can be delegated to it, as with the sale of Iraqi oil, where most of the supervision is being carried out by the overseers.

The second point outlined in the draft resolution is that the procedures for authorizing and acquiring goods could be significantly improved. The Council agrees. I am certain that in his assessment the Secretary-General will propose useful measures in this respect.

The third and last point is that an increase in resources and thus in the oil income allocated to humanitarian aid is indispensable. The Council would clearly indicate that it is inclined to permit such an increase. The aim would be to increase food rations and improve the distribution of medicines and health supplies, and also, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General, to repair infrastructure. The condition of the infrastructure is extremely poor; this is one of the main reasons for the current lamentable health situation of the Iraqi people. Very significant resources are required for this purpose. The figure most often mentioned by the humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations in Baghdad is $4 billion, against the present $2 billion. I think that figure is a reasonable one, pending consideration of this matter by the Secretary-General.

It is good that the Council has been able on these three main points to indicate clearly the course and the spirit that should govern our consideration of the supplementary report that will be submitted by the Secretary-General.

The Council has also been able to demonstrate pragmatism and realism on the distribution plan. As the plan could not be prepared in time, the Council will agree to propose a mechanism that will make it possible to ease this problem, for no longer than one month. During that period, oil sales will enable Iraq to buy medicines, health supplies and food without interruption. Also, to make the system more flexible, the draft resolution would allow the time frame to be reviewed. Specifically, we are thinking of seeking more flexible

formulas to avoid setting three-month ceilings on oil sales, which create crises and disruption on the oil markets.

The direction as set out in the draft resolution is clear, but we must quickly draw the proper conclusions. It is intolerable that the Iraqi people should continue to suffer forever. These are no mere words; the suffering is real. According to United Nations agencies, 11 per cent of children under age five suffer from acute malnutrition and 31 per cent from chronic malnutrition. The Secretary-General observes that the food ration of 2,030 calories is inadequate, and must be improved and increased. United Nations observers report an exceptionally serious deterioration in the health infrastructure, which is an underlying reason for the high infant mortality rate. Let me cite some information from the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund. Infant mortality went from 24 per 1,000 in 1990 to 168 per 1,000 in 1996, a sevenfold increase. Deaths among children under five years of age have tripled, going from 1,500 per month to 4,500 per month in 1996. Since 1990 the mortality rate among those over 50 has tripled. I shall say no more.

Those are the facts. It is good that a consensus could emerge on this perceptive and sombre diagnosis and on the need to remedy the humanitarian situation. My delegation will support the draft resolution, which reflects that consensus. We hope that the consensus will hold in two months' time when we will have to adopt the necessary reform of resolution 986 (1995).

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): Our purpose this evening is not to put Iraq on trial or to go back over international events in recent weeks showing that relations between Iraq and the Special Commission had deteriorated.

You, Mr. President, informed the international community, and Iraq in particular, of the Security Council's position through a Council statement in which you recalled certain principles and the need for Iraq to abide by certain Council decisions.

Today the Security Council wants to show once again that it draws a distinction between the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people. The Council wants to show eloquently that it never intended to punish the Iraqi people; that it rightly wanted to impose sanctions on a Government that had violated the United Nations Charter, though it has always been aware of the suffering of an innocent people.

By adopting resolution 986 (1995), the Security Council wanted to indicate clearly its awareness of the realities in Iraq, which remind us that there are vulnerable sectors of society that are suffering and that there are children who do not receive proper nourishment, do not get enough food to turn them into tomorrow's upright men and women — people able to take part in building their country, citizens of the world who could someday sit at this table to discuss and decide with us what should be done in order to bring about world peace, which is something we all desire.

From the report submitted to the Security Council by the Secretary-General, the Council has seen that there are serious shortages in Iraq and that it is necessary for all Council members, as well as for the rest of the international community, to respond to the appeal from Baghdad — a distress call from a people which itself is the victim of schemes that are surely incoherent, perhaps irresponsible and most definitely in violation of international law.

This evening we have gathered together to tell the Iraqi people that we have nothing against them, that we are aware of their suffering and that in our discussions we wanted to see and to decide how we can contribute to alleviating their suffering. Security Council resolution 986 (1995) was not designed to resolve all of the problems of the Iraqi people. This cannot be done since, as everyone knows, it is the responsibility of the Iraqi Government to contribute not only to the development of its country but also to the well-being of its people.

However, there is a situation we must all understand. As suggested by the Secretary-General, we must bring a human viewpoint to this debate and remember our common humanity while contemplating what we propose to do.

This is the point we have reached, and this is what the draft resolution we are about to adopt is intended to express. In the draft resolution we acknowledge that there are shortcomings; we acknowledge that improvements should be made; we recognize that resolution 986 (1995) established a process that was new, that for the United Nations had no precedent, that could serve as a line of conduct and that would help us implement a proper procedure that would be approved of by the international community as a whole.

We saw that it was necessary to correct certain shortcomings and that it was necessary to remember that

in Iraq there are children who are suffering, sick people who cannot get treatment and children who do not go to school. We had a duty to respond to those needs, and that is what we have done.

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to say how much we welcome the great courage shown in recognizing that we have the duty not to remain indifferent to what is happening in Iraq, not to remain indifferent in the face of the suffering of a people that is itself a victim. We will never forget, of course, that it is the responsibility of the Iraqi leadership to redress this situation. It is up to them to subscribe to and to respect the relevant Security Council resolutions and to ensure that the Special Commission can conclude its work quickly so that the sanctions can be lifted. But in the meantime, this evening we have the responsibility to respond, albeit modestly, to the appeal that has come to us from Iraq, as well as to the message to us from the Secretary-General.

The draft resolution asks that we spare no effort to ensure that the mechanisms that were created be improved, that certain shortcomings be resolved and that we respond quickly to the pressing needs of the Iraqis for the humanitarian aid that we want to dispatch to them. We have seen that we ought to review the mechanisms, the modus operandi and the very working methods of the sanctions Committee established under resolution 661 (1990). We all agree on the need to contribute constructively to improving the Committee's modus operandi. But perhaps we should also recall that all of us seated around this table are also members of that Committee, that if there are shortcomings then we are all responsible, and that if there is any possibility of improving the working methods of that Committee, then perhaps we are all called upon to display more willingness in that regard.

Let me say, on behalf of my delegation, that we agree with what the Secretary-General says in his report. We agree with what he advocates. We agree with what he so courageously recommends: that we re-examine the revenues and consider how much we might be able — and I hope in the near future — to add to Iraq's resources, so that the Committee, within the requisite norms, can approve the requests to provide all the humanitarian aid required to meet the needs of the Iraqi population.

We hope that when the plan is adopted, and when the Secretary-General submits his latest thoughts on the need that we are already recognizing today — that of increasing oil revenues — on behalf of my delegation, I hope that this Council will be true to itself and that it will respond to this heartfelt call to all of us to stand up, show our humanity, respond to this urgent distress call and respond favourably to the need to help the Iraqi people — its children and its elderly people, who are all suffering and who are looking to us this evening for a glimmer of hope.

Mr. Konishi (Japan): Throughout the process of the adoption and implementation of resolution 986 (1995), Japan consistently supported its objective: to provide for the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, who are suffering from the impact of sanctions. My delegation is concerned about the Secretary-General's observation in his report that, despite the ongoing implementation of resolution 986 (1995), the population of Iraq continues to face serious nutritional and health situations and there is an urgent need to contain the risk of a further deterioration.

In renewing the provisions of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), my delegation is guided by the practical consideration of ensuring the smooth and efficient implementation of the resolution. The Secretary-General's report indicates that the slow and erratic pace at which humanitarian inputs arrive in Iraq has been very unsatisfactory, and it expresses his intention to submit to the Council a supplementary report with recommendations addressing concerns over processing and supply issues.

The report of the Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) also states that it will continue to work for the smooth and effective implementation of the relevant arrangements under resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997). We support these efforts of the Secretary-General and the Committee established by resolution 661 (1990), and my delegation will continue to contribute actively to this process.

We have noted with particular interest the Secretary-General's suggestion that the Council may wish to re-examine the adequacy of the revenues as envisaged by resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997) and to consider the possibility of increasing those revenues to meet Iraq's priority humanitarian requirements. Japan is ready to consider this matter favourably, based on the supplementary report to be submitted by the Secretary-General, taking into account the relevant aspects, such as the specific humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people.

In paragraph 6 of the draft resolution, the Council would express its willingness to consider these issues in the light of the recommendations of the Secretary-General to be included in the supplementary report.

For these reasons, my delegation will support the draft resolution.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Russia is deeply concerned about the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, with its very serious consequences. The Secretary-General's report to the Council contains an exhaustive picture of the truly disastrous situation of broad sectors of the Iraqi people. The present food ration for the Iraqis is still inadequate. The problem of chronic malnutrition persists. United Nations observers note a serious deterioration in the health infrastructure and a continuing shortage of basic medicines and medical equipment, all of which lead to an increase in the mortality rate, particularly among children, and there is a growing threat of epidemics.

In referring to the reasons for inadequate supplies of humanitarian goods, we should not evade the question of the blocking of contracts in the sanctions Committee. The blocking of humanitarian applications, particularly in the early stages of the implementation of the "humanitarian resolution", led to months of delay and the destabilization of the whole dynamics of the delivery of basic supplies, including the most necessary medicines. An overwhelming proportion of the goods provided for under resolution 1111 (1997) have still not reached Iraq, to say nothing about the question of distributing them among the people.

One strong element of the Secretary-General's report is the comprehensive approach he takes to the problems of food and health. It is unthinkable that we can solve those problems if parallel measures are not taken with regard to electricity and water supplies and to agriculture. The quantity and range of the spare parts and equipment supplied are insufficient to provide the population with drinking water, and there is a continuing drop in the production of electricity, which undermines the real value of the humanitarian inputs.

We fully support the approach reflected in the Secretary-General's report aimed at increasing revenues in order to meet the priority humanitarian needs of Iraq. Together with other members of the Security Council, we welcome the leadership shown by the Secretary-General in addressing the issue of overcoming the humanitarian crisis in Iraq. The establishment of the Office of the Iraq Programme will help in this effort.

The intensive consultations held over the past two days led to substantive discussions about ways of implementing the oil-for-humanitarian goods formula. Proposals were made by, *inter alia*, my own delegation which, in one way or another, were finally reflected in the draft resolution. In particular, the draft resolution states that the present distribution plan will continue to apply to foodstuffs, medicine and health supplies, pending the Secretary-General's approval of a new plan, to be submitted by Iraq within a month. This would ensure that there would be no interruption in the process of providing humanitarian supplies to Iraq.

In general, we start from the premise that the decision we are going to take today is interim in nature. It is a kind of prelude to a thorough review in the Security Council of the main issues relating to the implementation of the oil-for-humanitarian goods formula. Such a review will take place within the context of the consideration of the supplementary report to be submitted by the Secretary-General in January 1998, with recommendations about specific ways of improving the implementation of the humanitarian programme and allocating additional funds for this purpose.

Russia believes that the amount of oil exports must be increased to some $4 billion per six-month period. This is the only way to provide adequate financing for humanitarian purchases. Of course, this will make sense only if the practice of blocking humanitarian contracts in the sanctions Committee is ended. There has long been a need to rescind the so-called interim quota of $1 billion per quarter, which applies to oil exports from Iraq. It is an artificial limitation that has already led to serious complications in the implementation of resolution 1111 (1997). In this connection, the draft resolution contains an important provision, which expresses the Council's willingness, in the light of the Secretary-General's supplementary report, to change the time-frame and to consider the possibility of additional resources. In this context, we should also return to the question of the interim three-month quotas.

We would have preferred the draft resolution to be stronger and for other ideas, expressed by many delegations, to be reflected in it. However, as it stands it represents a step forward, and on the whole it meets the need for the continuation of the humanitarian programme. Accordingly, and taking account of its interim nature, the

Russian delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): Today the Council will once again act with dispatch to address the pressing humanitarian needs of those most in need in Iraq. Credit should go the United Kingdom for its leadership on this issue.

In his report to the Council, the Secretary-General identifies ongoing problems and concerns attending the implementation of the programme established under resolution 986 (1995). He notes the serious nutritional and health situation affecting the most vulnerable groups in Iraq; the sometimes slow pace of delivery of humanitarian goods to Iraq; and difficulties with their distribution once those goods arrive in the country.

We take all these problems very seriously, and believe they must be addressed on an urgent basis. We therefore welcome the commitment of the Secretary-General to prepare a thorough and systematic study of the entire resolution 986 (1995) process. This study will be an immeasurable help to the Council.

We are willing, in the light of the recommendations of the Secretary-General, not only to find ways of improving the implementation of the humanitarian programme, but also to consider additional resources which may be needed to meet the priority humanitarian needs of the people of Iraq.

As I have said, the Council has acted with dispatch to address the humanitarian concerns of the Iraqi people. Iraq should now do the same. Iraq should stop playing politics with resolution 986 (1995) contracts.

Iraq should stop submitting resolution 986 (1995) contracts that fail to meet the prima facie criteria and procedures that Iraq agreed to, and in some cases insisted upon, with the United Nations Secretariat.

Iraq should end its threats — made as recently as late last week — to cease cooperation with the United Nations on this programme unless its excessive demands for changes are met.

The Government of Iraq should restore the food ration for each Iraqi citizen that was cut by the Government even as more food was flowing into the country.

And Iraq should never again unilaterally and inexplicably interrupt the sales of oil that the Council has authorized to help feed the Iraqi people. I point out that by operative paragraph 2 of this draft resolution the Council would specifically decide:

> "that the provisions of the distribution plan in respect of goods purchased in accordance with resolution 1111 (1997) shall continue to apply to foodstuffs, medicine and health supplies purchased in accordance with this resolution pending the Secretary-General's approval of a new distribution plan".

We are including this language so that, despite the Iraqi leadership's not having submitted a distribution plan on time, the flow of food and medicine to the Iraqi people will not be interrupted.

In short, we call upon the Iraqi leadership to demonstrate as much compassion for the Iraqi people as the Security Council has by adopting resolutions 986 (1995), 1111 (1997) and 1129 (1997), and will demonstrate once again by adopting this draft resolution today.

I think by now it should be clear to all where genuine concern for the welfare of the Iraqi people resides. This concern has been unshaken by the determined efforts of the Iraqi Government to undercut the Security Council and its resolutions at every turn. My Government will continue to support the resolution 986 (1995) humanitarian programme, because it was the right thing to do when the resolution was adopted in 1995, and it remains the right thing to do now.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/1997/951.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Kenya, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1143 (1997).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Gomersall (United Kingdom): The Council has just voted unanimously to continue its work to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people by extending the oil-for-food programme for a further six months. We deplore the fact that the Iraqi regime chooses to let this suffering continue. It could be swiftly ended if Iraq complied with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Although the Government of Iraq may be indifferent to the plight of the Iraqi people, this resolution demonstrates that the international community is not. As one of the sponsors of resolution 986 (1995), the United Kingdom attaches great importance to the success of the oil-for-food programme as a temporary measure. The Secretary-General's report clearly highlights why the oil-for-food programme must continue. Reports that 31 per cent of Iraqi children under the age of five are chronically malnourished are indeed alarming.

The Secretary-General's report, however, reveals significant delays in the delivery of essential humanitarian supplies. We welcome the examination of the programme which is now being undertaken by the Secretary-General through the Executive Director of the Office of the Iraq Programme. It is important that we have a thorough analysis of the reasons for the delays and proposals for remedying them at all relevant points in the chain.

With regard to food and medicines, in particular, we do not believe that the bulk of the problems lie with the sanctions Committee. We also need an equally careful analysis of the adequacy of existing resources. We look forward to receiving the results of the Secretary-General's review and are ready to consider positively all recommendations for improving the implementation of the programme, including possible increases in the quantity of oil to be sold.

The Government of Iraq also has an essential role for which it should be held accountable. It must produce a distribution plan on time and it must demonstrate its own efforts to give priority to feeding its people. The purposes of this resolution are not to substitute for the efforts of the Government of Iraq or to provide them with the luxury of building palaces, as described with unaccountable pride by Mr. Tariq Aziz in his letter of 26 November. We hope that the Secretary-General's team can put these points clearly to the Government of Iraq so that we maintain the credibility and purpose of the programme.

My Government also urges the Government of Iraq not to delay exports of oil under this resolution, as it did last summer. The Council has made provision in this resolution to roll over the provisions of the distribution plan in order to compensate for the fact that Iraq has not yet submitted a new distribution plan. As is clear from the Secretary-General's report, any delay in oil sales will only result in further delays in the arrival of humanitarian goods. We hope that Baghdad will not again neglect the welfare of its own people in this manner.

We conclude with our initial point, that this temporary mechanism and the suffering of the Iraqi people would be unnecessary were it not for Iraq's constant evasion over the last six years of its obligations under resolution 687 (1991) and other related resolutions. The Council has made clear both its determination to achieve Iraq's full compliance with those resolutions and the benefits which will flow from compliance. We hope that this message is being received by the Iraqi people. We hope, indeed, that this message will be transmitted to the people by the agencies of the United Nations present in Iraq, and we hope that the message will be acted on by the Iraqi Government.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Costa Rica.

My delegation is pleased to support the extension of the oil-for-food programme for an additional period of 180 days, and has therefore lent its support to the draft resolution we have just adopted, which takes into account the important and positive recommendations and comments made by the Secretary-General in his most recent and valuable report.

The aim of this programme, which is unique in its magnitude and importance in the history of the United Nations, is to alleviate Iraq's difficult humanitarian situation. The very serious health and nutrition conditions besetting the Iraqi population compel the Security Council to take effective and urgent action.

While it is true that sanctions are not the only cause of the difficult humanitarian situation facing the people of Iraq, and that the Government and the political and military authorities of that country are to a large extent responsible, there is no doubt that the existence of sanctions has an impact on measures that the Iraqi authorities should themselves take to resolve the humanitarian problem once and for all.

In the context of the legal regime established by the Charter, sanctions regimes constitute a legitimate means of collective defence for the international community. Costa Rica is aware of the responsibility and risks involved in using such regimes, especially when sanctions affect the humanitarian situation of civilian populations. In this connection, the actions of the Security Council must be guided first and foremost by an awareness of such humanitarian situations.

In the specific case of Iraq, Costa Rica believes that in view of the serious humanitarian situation in that country the Council will have to give positive consideration to whether current revenues, as well as increased revenues, are adequate to meet the priority humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. In this regard, we believe that the resolution just adopted represents for the United Nations an important step towards improving the humanitarian situation. In this connection, we attach the utmost importance to the supplementary report — expected by late January — that the Secretary-General is to present in order to evaluate and decide upon the situation. In the same context, the sanctions Committee and the Secretariat must redouble efforts to improve and make truly efficient the process of approving and processing contracts, as well as the supply of foodstuffs, medicines and related items for the Iraqi people.

We are very pleased by the unanimity of the Security Council in favour of the resolution, which is essentially humanitarian in nature.

I resume my function as President of the Council.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.